EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING INSECURITY AND PROPAGANDA IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The Social Media platform is one of the means of disseminating information which is seen as the fastest way of spreading information globally. It has reengineered social interaction among peers, businesses, governments and so on. However, the miss-use of social media among handlers to advance their motives has no doubt, increase the level of global insecurity. Thus, this study examines the effect of Social Media in Promoting Insecurity and Propaganda using Facebook, X and WhatsApp as a case study. The study specifically looks at the extent in which Facebook and X integrate Nigerian into global security awareness and otherwise. The study utilizes secondary data sourced through books, academic journals, online sources among other documents. The study is anchored on the theory of uses and gratifications theory which emphasized how people use media to fulfill their various needs. The findings of the study revealed among others that even though neither Facebook, X nor WhatsApp can be regarded as the root cause of national insecurity in Nigeria, but they contributed a lot to the national insecurity witnessing in some parts of Nigeria due to it misused by the handlers. It was also discovered that the regulation of social media in Nigeria for security purpose is very poor, which is a matter of concern to the citizens. The study recommends among others that individuals (citizens) should stop spreading, and promoting offensive, abusive, fake news (information), which advances social hatred, and terrorism attack rumors on social media platforms.

Introduction

In essence, social media utilizes cutting-edge mass communication tools to disseminate information on a global scale. In developing countries such as Nigeria, social media has become an essential tool, making it the most extensively used technological advancement of the 21st century. In no measure, social media has the capacity to disseminate both favorable and unfavorable messages (Trottier & Fuchs, 2014). This may not be unconnected with the fact that social media is widely used by many individuals and organizations worldwide to disseminate their messages, including political factions, religious groups, individuals, and terrorists. The impact of

social media on face-to-face encounters among various individuals is unquestionably detrimental. As a modern means of interaction, online social media platforms enable worldwide communities to access information and insights on global security and insecurity, thanks to their openness and connection. The increasing use of social media platforms contributes to the dissemination of false information in modern culture. There is no denying social media's unquestionable power. For instance, every second, 600,000 people post tweets, while Facebook members upload around 300 million photos every day. Telegram has a user base of 500 million, whilst the most prominent YouTube channels have over 14 billion monthly views (Ani & Onyebukwa, 2016). Moreover, these websites have not only promoted violence, but also disseminated misinformation and fostered political discord, exacerbating an already precarious political environment. Each year, an increasing amount of evidence surfaces indicating that over 80 nations conduct coordinated campaigns of disinformation on social media. Several of these projects are shaped by profit-driven enterprises and organizations with formal support (Tomas & Husted, 2020). As such, we argue that social media has become an essential component of the everyday lives of young people in Nigeria. By implication, dissemination of false information may quickly occur and manifest in several fields, but it only takes a few narratives to undermine the credibility of evidence. Many professions encounter this unsettling but essential reality as they strive to prevent crimes. A propagandist may use the vast network of connections on social media to disseminate a range of deceptive assertions, allegations, and conspiracies, and thereafter observe which ones get endorsement. In modern asymmetric warfare, malicious actors, whether state actors, parastatal organizations, non-state actors, or outsiders, have the autonomy to choose the timing, location, and frequency of their strikes (Tomas & Husted, 2020). This undoubtedly has implication on national security.

The prevalence, velocity, and growing complexity of disinformation pose significant challenges to efforts aimed at combating national instability and crimes by successive governments in the country. It wasobserved that social media has fundamentally transformed the manner in which governments, corporations, and people engage in communication and exchange with each other. As demonstrated in Nigeria's northern and southeast, social media platforms aid in the spread of social and national insecurity. Separatist organizations have organized protests in the southeastern region of the nation, while insurgent groups in the northern region have been conducting propaganda operations. Social media users disseminate this propaganda, which may include erroneous information, and these factions use many forms of online media to disseminate their message. Social media has brought about a transformation in the way wars unfold in the world's most fragile nations. Disinformation campaigns, election manipulation, and online recruitment by violent extremist groups all provide digital threats that impede efforts to avoid or reduce violent conflict. These threats worsen the amplification of conflict drivers, the creation of spoiler chances, and the intensification of polarization. This study looks at how social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, and among other social media sites contribute to the spread of uneasiness and anxiety, using secondary data which was sourced through books, academic journals, and internet sources among other documents.

Literature Review: General Perspectives on Social Media

Basically, social media platforms facilitate users to interact with a wide-ranging and worldwide audience. They serve as mechanisms through which various groups are educated, culture, information, and ideas are disseminated. Solomon (2012) defines social media as a technical term that specifically refers to the techniques by which individuals engage in socially mediated communication to exchange messages instantly or over long distances. Social media platforms have become the main way to quickly and effectively reach a large, diverse, and unknown audience in today's time. This categorization includes several media forms such as the internet, radio, and television.

Social media refers to several mass communication channels, including X, Facebook, YouTube, as well as television, newspapers, and radio (Trottier & Fuchs, 2014). Similarly, Tomas and Husted (2020), argued that social media platforms enable the worldwide distribution of knowledge via modern methods of communication. Despite their reputation for regressive governance, some Arab and North African nations had upheavals advocating for human rights and democracy during the Arab Spring (Richard, Aborisade, Abolaji, &Obileye, 2017). This incidence serves as a clear example of the recent impact of social media on society ideals. According to Nsudu and Onwe (2017), social media allows users to create their own content and also helps them engage with others. However, we see social media as a broad platform that accommodates its users unhindered, and without any form of discriminations**.** Consequently, the introduction of social media has

completely changed how individuals interact, communicate, and plan social events. These platforms collect data to strengthen basic understanding, therefore enabling better emergency response by government, organizations, and institutions (Richard, Aborisade, Abolaji, & Obileye 2017). During times of crisis, users have the option to live-stream their location and other pertinent details. This allows anyone from any place to quickly start a conversation and provide help, direction, and support. Regarding the incorporation of professional services into operations, the response team encounters substantial obstacles presented by the general public's proactive use of social media platforms, journalists, and routes for communicating with other victims and media during a crisis (Bruce & Lindsay, 2011). This can be accord to fluidity nature of social media itself.

Social media platforms such as YouTube, X, and Facebook, among other social media sites, had substantial influence during the Arab Spring of 2011. As such, social media has a consequential impact on the evidence and media coverage of the incident (Tomas & Husted, 2020). Twitter, now X microblogging platform in particular, underwent a pivotal moment in 2006. An outstanding characteristic of this network is the stringent and influential limit of 140 characters for tweets. Another method of downloading a post is to use an integrated search tool, such as an API (Application Programming Interface) or a designated hashtag. X became the dominant social media network in 2013, with over 150 million members and 500 million daily messages. By doing a historical analysis of past "Occupy Wall Street" events, one may see the impact of X on the following responses. The global spread of both physical and online demonstrations took place in about two months (Bruce & Lindsay, 2011). By using X platform, it was possible to track the identity, location, and other crucial details of activists.

On his own view, McGuire (2015) established that social media serve as comprehensive platform for mass communication, including many types of written, broadcast, and spoken information that may effectively reach a substantial audience. This category encompasses several types of media, such as radio, television, motion pictures, the internet, print magazines, and various other mediums. Social media is a vital aspect of modern life, regardless of where one is located (such as Britain, America, etc.). The media serve a dual role in both describing and influencing a culture, a concept known as "mediated" according to sociologists. A multitude of media platforms, such as magazines, television, and billboards, constantly bombard communities and people with messages. These communications not only market things, but also emphasize interests, goals, and dispositions. Given that a large portion of people rely only on social media for news, any kind of media bias, whether it be democratic or not, might have significant ramifications. The people's faith in the media has an impact on both the democratic agenda-setter and the subjects that are discussed in public forums. This is because citizens are better equipped to participate in democratic processes when they get information about their rights and responsibilities via social media.

It has been established that defining social media is a tough task, as Trottier and Fuchs (2014) argue, because of its intricate nature. Social media platforms enable communication among a vast number of users by using a diverse range of network apps and technologies, which in turn leads to the emergence of various problems. This may not be unconnected because of its intrinsically social nature. Social media platforms enhance cognitive processes by consolidating individual and communal concepts, similar to other computer technologies. Online platforms that enable users to select and share material are often known as "social media." The major objective of social media is to enable social discourse and events by encouraging the establishment of online social virtual communities. Currently, there is a wide array of social media platforms, such as Instagram, Wikipedia, Google+, Yahoo Messenger, WhatsApp, Facebook, and X, among others. Currently, social media apps and technologies are significantly influencing the cultural, political, economic, and social aspects of human activities. Furthermore, it has been shown that the tools often extend fabricated lies and inaccurate information. Millions of Nigerians and those residing overseas now consider social media to be an indispensable aspect of modern existence. But a lot of people also utilize these platforms to spread false information. Examples of this phenomenon include groups like Boko Haram, the Fulani herdsmen/bandits, and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Furthermore, social media in Nigeria has the propensity to undermine stability and jeopardize national security. Other social media sites like X and WhatsApp are frequently brought up in discussions concerning Facebook (Cann, 2011). From the perspectives of theory of uses and gratifications to furnish which its main thrust lies on how people utilize media to satisfy a variety of requirements. Aside from the desire to establish one's own identity, these desires include the need for (para-social) connections, entertainment, and diversion. The importance of privacy concerns may be lessened by the temptation of quick satisfaction in all three domains on social networking sites such as Facebook and X. Social media platforms are

therefore a collection of online venues that facilitate user engagement and cohesion through the provision of various internet-based services (Chukwuere & Onyebukwa 2017). They noted that new media platforms like Facebook, X, and WhatsApp have reinforced social and political relationships. By implication, insurgent groups frequently employ specialized websites and servers to disseminate their propaganda through social media (Nsudu & Onwe 2017). More often than not, aside fundraising, recruitment, and training, they employ the media for a variety of cybercrime operations. Extreme insecurity results from the site's active support of both domestic and international terrorist organizations. Strategic and operational objectives are often achieved by terrorist organizations on a global scale through the utilization of diverse social media platforms. By disseminating misinformation, they elevate their own visibility through the media. Nigerians must perpetually be on guard for their lives and property due to the escalating level of insecurity within the nation. The proliferation of social media platforms reinforces this feeling of insecurity. Social freedom and the absence of cyberspace regulation, according to Nsudu and Onwe (2017), prohibit the general public from readily monitoring or restricting social media. As a result of social media's implicit freedom of expression, anyone can create anything and publish it online at any time. On social media, ordinary citizens also use to spread hate speech and incite violence through fabricated news articles and posts, in addition to terrorist organizations that are exploiting the platform to compromise national security.

An illustration of this can be seen in the proliferation and variety of unverified news articles and information that have recently surfaced on social media platforms and originated from the corridor connecting southern and northern Nigeria. Like in industrialized countries where they utilize the media to combat terrorism and criminality, the prevention of criminal activities such as human trafficking in Nigeria has been significantly aided by social media platforms such as Facebook (Nsudu & Onwe, 2017). Conversely, the paper asserts that insecurity in Nigeria hinders the progress of society to its fullest potential. This become possible through dissemination of misinformation via social media. Undoubtedly, social media influences how individuals and organizations interact, as well as how they engage with news organizations and platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. Similar to how they do in the north and southeast of Nigeria, social media platforms are used to foster social and national insecurity**.** By implication, rebel groups in the north have been employing terrorism and propaganda for a considerable period of time, while separatists in the southeast of the country have executed protests using social media. All of these groups utilize social media and other forms of online media to disseminate their objectives, with the general public also lending support to them by sharing and amplifying propaganda (often containing false information). Terrorist organizations employ dedicated servers and websites to disseminate their propaganda through social media platforms (Nsudu & Onwe, 2017). This submission has been established that criminal organizations and terrorists are using social media to disseminate their messages because it is accessible and inexpensive. Indeed, young people are not yet prepared to wholeheartedly accept government control over social media due to the gravity of the cause. Hence, government efforts to regulate social media remains a matter of debates.

Social Media and Insecurity

The concept of security is, without a question, complex. Reason being, security is still a major hurdle for countries and the global community overall. Without a question, issues related to maintaining or resolving global security threats have had a major place in the framework of international politics. Leaders and policymakers throughout the globe, including in Nigeria, have acknowledged that security remains a clear policy barrier to efficient government, and they are working toward this goal. Not only that, but the characteristics of modern global security threats, including terrorism, also impact and explain the growing security concerns in Nigeria today.

As a long-standing member of the international community, Nigeria inherited some of the problems it has with its own internal security (Ani &Onyebukwa, 2016). Terrorism, which emerged as a worldwide phenomenon and was essentially alien to Nigeria, is an example of a security concern in the country. Unfortunately, in the face of persistent threats to the country's survival and cohabitation, Nigeria's national security, which is an essential component of good government, continues to be steadily weakened.

Characteristics and Uses of Social Media

Fundamentally, social media comprises traditional modes of mass communication (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, and X) as well as global mass communication platforms (e.g., radio, newspapers, and television). As Trottier and Fuchs (2014) assert. Without a doubt, social media serve as the conduit by which information is distributed on a global scale via mass communication technologies, as stated by

Tomas and Husted (2020). The Arab Spring serves as an exemplary case study that demonstrates the current impact of international media on societal values. During this period, citizens of several North African and Arab nations instigated a surge of demonstrations in support of democracy and human rights, despite their countries having the exact opposite reputation. Presently, individuals communicate, interact, and organize events in light of social media. During periods of emergency, these platforms facilitate the collection of data to increase the awareness of governing bodies, institutions, and personnel, which ultimately leads to quicker response periods (Richard, Aborisade, Abolaji, & Obileye, 2017). Users are afforded the ability to transmit live-streams of their location, position, and any other pertinent data in the event of an emergency. Consequently, assistance, advice, and assistance can be promptly rendered by individuals located in any part of the globe through the commencement of a dialogue. A number of challenges stemming from the extensive use of social media platforms, mass communication among journalists, and interactions among fellow victims during a catastrophic incident impede the response team's ability to integrate specialized services into operational procedures (Bruce & Lindsay, 2011). Social media sites like Facebook, X, and YouTube gave the Arab Spring movement a lot of support in 2011. As such, social media platforms enable the spread of information and evidence related to the incident (Tomas & Husted, 2020). To locate a particular post for the purpose of downloading, users are provided with the choice to utilize either the site's integrated search function or conduct a hashtag search.

X emerged as a formidable platform in 2013, accumulating in excess of 150 million users and 500 million messages per day. An examination of past "Occupy Wall Street" demonstrations reveals that X significantly influences the manner in which these types of protests are met. In less than two months, live demonstrations and online protests proliferated across the United States and the globe (Bruce & Lindsay, 2011). Utilizing data from X, it was possible to surveil the locations, identities, and other critical information of activists. By utilizing social media platforms to educate themselves on their rights and privileges and to counteract the influence of propaganda, individuals can engage in active citizenship in the democratic process (Flay & Cook, 2010).

The Challenges Associated with Social Media on Security and Propaganda

We argued that since social media is still a relatively new technology, it is too early to forecast its long-term effects, whether positive or negative. In contrast, the extensive use of social media is significantly correlated with an increase in illicit activity and the spread of false information. The proliferation of online harassment, trolls, and hate speech has led to the emergence of hostile user environments on social media platforms (Philips, 2015; Matias, 2016). The prominence of idealized life depictions on social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and X, has been linked to a decline in people's mental health (Primack et al., 2019). These depictions may lead to feelings of inadequacy and comparison. Individuals' mental health has been adversely affected by this conduct, which has contributed to the toxicity of the online culture.

The implication, however, is that fraudsters are using social media to pilfer the identities of their victims or harm their own reputations. Tens of thousands of people use social media and networking sites every day, posing privacy threats to them. Criminals consider them to be the most desirable targets as a consequence. Personal information should never be voluntarily disclosed online due to privacy concerns. Social engineering could be utilized by criminals to gain access to this information and exploit it for their own gain. The proliferation of social media has rendered users vulnerable to threats to their privacy and security. In addition to cyberstalking, phishing, spam, clickjacking, malware, inference attacks, and cross-site scripting, there are numerous other detrimental online threats. There is a possibility that these threats could proliferate in unprecedented ways. Prolonged users of social media platforms are susceptible to various forms of threats, such as cyberstalking, identity theft, physical assaults, and data exploitation. The onus is typically on the users to address inappropriate content that is published online. Confusion ensues when individuals fail to distinguish between the public and private facets of their online persona. Unfortunately, there are situations in which individuals who inadvertently delete confidential information are unable to reverse the harm it has caused to their personal and professional lives.

The Effects of Social Media in Dissemination of Propaganda on Security among Nigerians

The global fight against terrorism relies heavily on the media, particularly social media platforms like Facebook and X (Ngige et al., 2016). The exact opposite is true; many sorts of terrorism and criminal activity may find a safe haven on social media. Terrorist attacks in recent years have endangered Nigerian citizens and caused irreparable harm, with costs in the billions of Naira. Among the many 21st-century internet breakthroughs, social media has profoundly altered

the nature of international politics, society, and communication. Because social media is both widely used and inexpensive, criminal and terrorist groups are taking use of it to spread their messages (Ngige et al., 2016). Social media is not a new idea in Nigerian society; many public and private organizations, spanning generations, use it every day, and the general public uses it to learn about and comprehend social, political, and economic events. According to Nsudu and Onwe (2017), terrorist groups use social media to plan attacks and organize their escapes both domestically and abroad. It has been shown that Boko Haram, IPOB respectively uses social media to carried out their activities in northern and southeast Nigeria. This assertion corroborates with Nsudu and Onwe (2017) who argued that social media postings, comments, and other types of information help spread propaganda and rally support for terrorist acts throughout the globe.

Conclusion

At this junction, it is worth noting that the misuse of social media platforms has contributed to or intensified national insecurity, particularly in Nigeria, despite the fact that social media does permit the constructive diffusion of information. Though the paper note that, in certain regions of Nigeria, social and national insecurity are not caused by Facebook, X, and WhatsApp. But criminal organizations do utilize social media to get their messages out there and to scare people beyond their target population. The paper identified that, X is believed to be the most influential and effective tool of social media because of its prominent and meticulous features that includes: powerful and influential personalities, mode of tweets, fast response, and large community. There is no doubt that, X plays a significant role in advertising and extending messages of hatred as well terror particularly in Nigeria. Concurringly, the study indicated that Nigeria has very lenient regulations regarding the security of social media. Furthermore, the research backs up what many have long suspected that social media platforms like Facebook and X contribute to the dissemination of misinformation, exacerbate tribal tensions, and even aid terrorists in their assaults in Nigeria. Consequently, it is argued that social media contributes to and exacerbates avoidable public unrest by disseminating misinformation and negative sentiments. In other words, ineffective social media usage is associated with the dissemination of security threats on a national scale. It was made quite clear that the connection was a major factor in the emergence of security concerns in the high-risk areas. When it comes down to it, terrorists and other social media users utilize the site to promote dangerous information and generate unnecessary fear to the society. The paper therefore, acknowledge the need for governments to reevaluate their approach to policing illicit social media usage in their effort to fight insecurity. As such, the time has finally come to have a system that allows social media administrators to identify and penalize users who misuse the platform to spread content that might provoke societal discontent and national insecurity.

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